DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 088 188 EA 005 921

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TITLE	The Utilization and Communication of Research Results.
INSTITUTION	Finnish National Board of Education, Helsinki. Research and Development Bureau.
PUB DATE	Apr 73
NOTE	20p.; Published in Information Bulletin, a publication of the Research and Development Bureau, National Board of Education, Helsinki
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50
DESCRIPTORS	*Communication (Thought Transfer); Decision Making; *Educational Research; *Foreign Countries; *Information Utilization; Research Projects; *Research Utilization
IDENTIFIERS	*Finland

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a system for the utilization and communication of educational research results to the decisionmaker and other interested persons. The system, developed by the National Board of Education of Sweden, explains what is meant by the utilization of research, analyzes the three stages of research, and presents several stages of research utilization. The document describes various means by which research results may be effectively communicated and suggests a form to be used to report on the dissemination of research findings. (Author/DN)

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INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Finland

ED 088188

005 921

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4/73

THE UTILIZATION AND COMMUNICATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

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Preface

Direction and development of educational research should pay attention to ways in which to achieve the most efficient cooperation possible between research and decision-making.

For this reason the Research and Development Bureau at the National Board of Education has evolved a system for the utilization and communication of research results, presented in this bulletin.

1. General remarks

The research financed by the National Board of Education is primarily applied research, where already the subject matter of the research at hand is aimed at being applied in practice. In order to attempt this kind of research policy, information must be obtained for developing activities, information which in itself is as practically valid as possible. Such an attempt has, however, been seen to be inadequate as there have been problems on the level of research activity in transmitting this kind of research information to the Board of Education in order for development activities to be carried out.

On the other hand, not enough attention has been paid at Board of Education level to ways in which it could have been possible to use information received from research required for development activities.

Because of this, the work of the Research and Development Bureau has been to begin developing methods connected with the utilization of research results. At the same time, a forwarding system for research information has been formed, as methods of utilization are closely connected with research and the communication of its results.

The scheme precented above has two main purposes:

1) to explain what is meant by the utilization of research,
2) to present fundamental solutions for the application of utilization and communication of this research.

2. What is meant by research utilization?

Utilization of research in this respect means putting research results to good use in development activities concerning plans for teaching. It also means action by which it is endeavoured to put research results in such a form that they can be generally put into practice. Thus this kind of action tries to direct research results

towards guiding principles, suggestions for methods of procedure, hints, recommendations and other similar means for curriculum development. The usefulness of research results are finally resolved by whether they have the expected effects on development activity.

Where utilization is concerned, it is largely a matter of the conclusions brought by a group of research results, related to the principles expressed in development activity. These results should thus be combined as frequently it is not possible to say on the basis of one individual result how some problem of development activity should be solved.

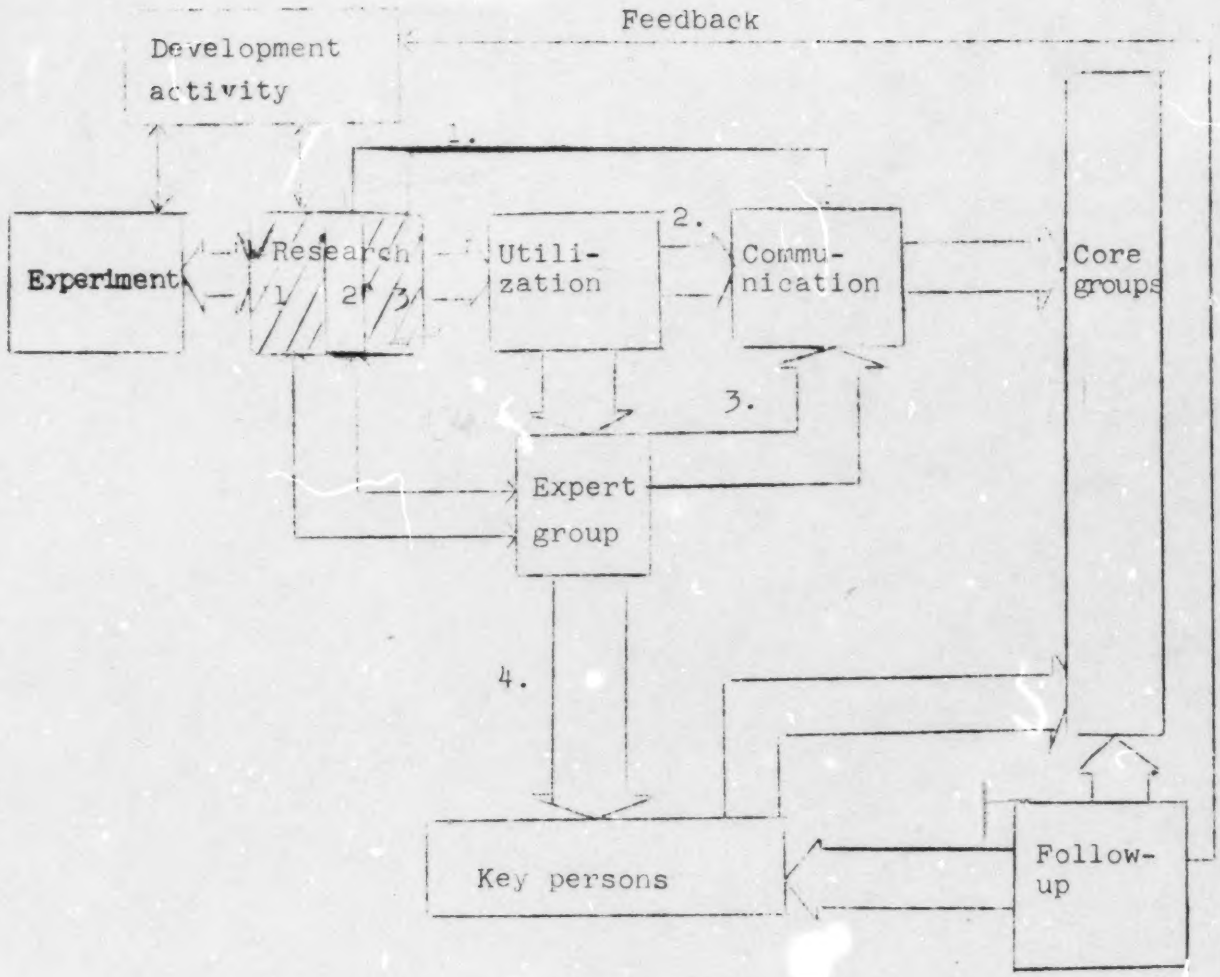
Finished research can already be utilized so that the results are analysed in order to bring out its useful points. This kind of utilization is not, however, sufficient. In order to be effective, utilization should be begun already at the stage when the research being commissioned is being planned. Utilization is thus linked to that which is being investigated. Although research methods may be on a scientifically high level, utilization may be almost impossible if the points of view with regard to utilization are not taken into consideration already at the planning stage.

The benefits of educational research often appear only at the end of quite a long time interval and are therefore difficult to see. Nevertheless, attempts should always be made to show the research's usefulness. This is one way in which to obtain a more extensive and more active group of research readers, and this partly influences too the general value of research activity.

3. The practical realization of utilization

The arrangement serving as the basis for utilization is presented in diagram 1. It is founded on the idea that research and experimentation should be directed by the development activity according to stated principles and the goals and focal-points set by these.

Diagram 1



The diagram concentrates on research activity. An experiment is set up only to the extent that the same course of procedure in its main features is suitable for it. From the diagram one can follow research belonging to development activity from the planning stage as far as the follow-up of utilization.

Research is divided roughly into three stages: planning, intermediate report and results.

The first stage shown in the diagram covers the normal research report stage.

A more efficient degree of activity can be reached if research results are worked on at least to the extent that the most essential among them are chosen and communicated to the core groups. This activity is covered by stage 2,

where the focal point is communication of research results.

In practice, however, it has been shown that stages 1 and 2 alone are not sufficient for maintaining activity. In an effort to increase efficiency, developing the system of utilization has led to using a so-called 'expert group'. This expert group is always composed of research expert representatives.

The expert group opens up new possibilities for utilization. Through it, utilization can be begun already in association with research planning and can be continued trhoughout the course of the research. The expert group can draw up recommendations for results in the preparation of the research, which are then directly communicated to the different core groups. The diagram's 3rd stage covers this method of utilization.

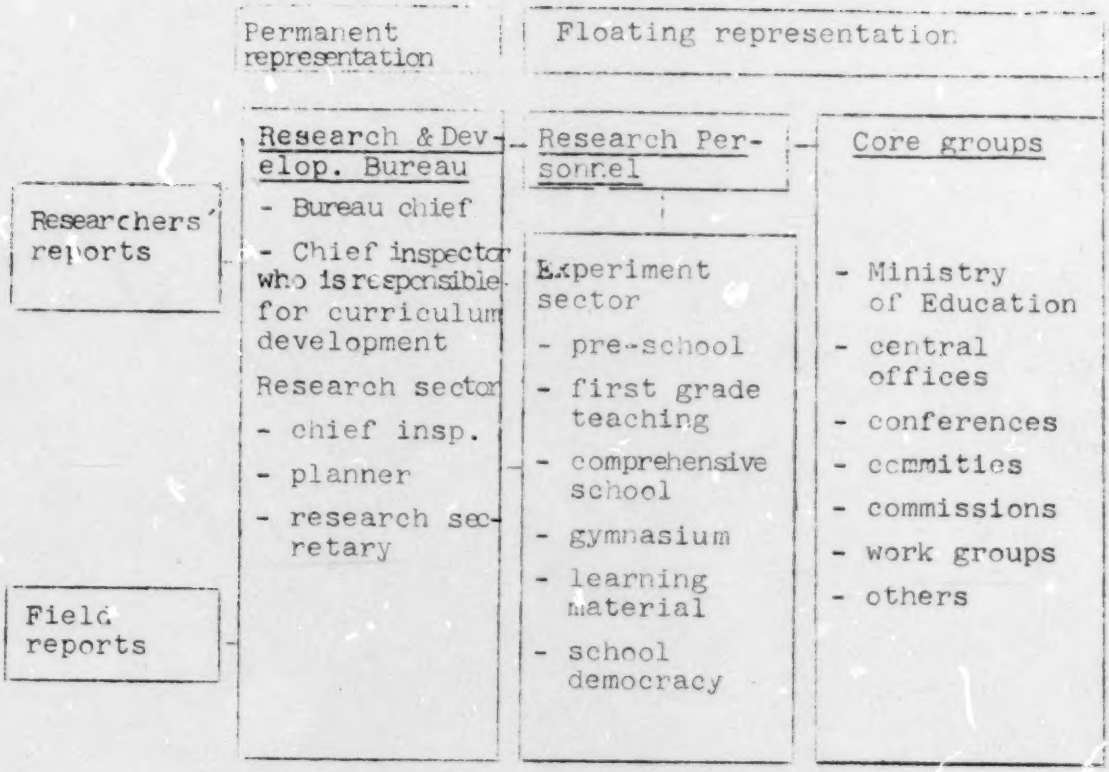
The fourth stage shown in the diagram can be considered as the most efficient tool of utilization. Through the expert group attempts are made to bring about changes from the point of view of the problem in the field under study by agency of important key persons.

Finally, the diagram shows the main features of the path taken by the follow-up of utilization. The feedback given by the follow-up makes possible continuous renewal and re-planning of development activity.

4. The work of the expert group

As the expert group has a central place in research utilization, we show the composition of the group in diagram 2.

Diagram 2



The expert group's permanent representation is the Board of Education's Research and Development Bureau, where the tasks of communication and organization of utilization belong mainly to the planner and research secretary.

The floating representation is formed by those people or groups of people who are seen to be in 'key positions' for realization of research utilization. In addition, various experimental sectors belong to the work of the floating representation, always depending on which sectors the research under consideration principally belongs to.

The following activities are primarily designed as the tasks of the expert group; their breadth and character may noticeably change with time if sufficient experience is obtained from the expert group's methods of procedure.

1) Analysis of research planning.

When the investigator presents his suggestions for reseach planning, the expert group ascertains that the research is being directed towards explaining essential questions

with regard to developing the curriculum. Already at this stage it discusses with the investigator the probable points of utilization and together they estimate what kind of different forms will be suggested by the research results under preparation. Similarly it is explained to the research worker what other investigations or experiments are under way or are being started within the problem area being considered. Evaluation of the scheme's scientific level does not belong to the expert group.

2) In the research agreement are instructions for intermediate reports. In connection with these, the expert group specifies more accurately the expectations of the research's method of presentation. If necessary, suggestions are made for revising the main emphasis of the research.

3) Analysis of research results

In research preparation, the expert group draws up detailed proposals with regard to points and methods of utilization. The group's job is also to check that the sceme is put into practice.

4) Researchers' statements

Upon deliberation, the expert group may ask for reports from researchers whose especially secret research passes over the group. In their reports, the investigators evaluate the use of the research over a greater length of time.

5) Field reports

Research reports can correspondingly be distributed to people who, in their work, are dealing with the problems contained in the research. They are then requested to 1) evaluate the practical use of the research, 2) show what kind of reform measures the research results may need and 3) say what new problems the results may lead to.

6) Proposals for taking action

A responsible research worker also prepares his views on the utilization presented by the research. The expert group gives proposals for action on the basis of their own deliberations, the researcher's presentation and reports received from the field.

The expert group has at its disposal a report of actions that can be taken, designed to facilitate the preparation of suggestions for action. This can also be used in the follow-up. The action report is given in appendix 1.

5 Communication

The council for school research in its committee report has emphasized the necessity for collecting research information and its transmission for use by administrative and planning units. The council has also stressed the need for a communications system connected with school research. In this way it would be possible to facilitate investigators in following current reform efforts and help planners and those in administration to keep up to date with regard to individual pieces of research being planned or in use and what research results are ready to be used.

Communication of research is not only the distribution of information, but also pedagogic development. Information giving is, on the one hand, the adaptation of education and teaching to the changing needs of society, and on the other hand, it is the altering of education and teaching for the development of society.

Information ideas are used alternatively with communication ideas. It is often difficult to separate the ideas from each other, as in many cases they mean the same. However, one can say that communication is a process while information is material. Communicating is the exchange of information.

The problem of information is also a communications problem. Information exists and is distributed but it is not read. The main reason why information does not reach those for whom it is intended lies in the material offered. For example, there is a need for preparing the results of educational research. Research should concentrate on reporting and popularizing results.

5.1. Means of communication

The more important means of communication are the mass communications: the press, radio and television. The most important means of communication is, however, the product itself, whose quality and outer appearance etc. are decisive. Nor does good communication take bad goods to their destination.

Communication activity is decided separately for each piece of research. In addition, special communication action is needed in the case where distribution is not attempted. Here the methods are determined according to situation and importance.

In the following we present the methods of communication employed by the Research and Development Bureau, these being determined according to object. As criteria for choosing a method have been in the first place importance and possibilities for realization.

1) Internal bulletin

The Research and Development Bureau produce a bulletin whose job is to inform about current matters and act as the Bureau's reference. The bulletin also contains accounts from each sector, information about internal activities and memos from Bureau meetings. The Research and Development Bureau's sectors are responsible for the contents. The bulletin is published once a month.

2) Statement

The purpose of the Statement is to give information about reforms and general and current affairs. The Research and Development Bureau is responsible for this Statement which appears four times a year and is printed in numbers according to need. The Statement is each time named according to the sector which has something important to communicate.

3) "Tiedonantoja koulututkimuksesta" (Reports on schools research)

The job of these reports is to give information concerning the utilization of research and experiment and to take care of general information about these matters. Reports on

schools research cover, among other things, the results and recommendations of research and experiments, selected investigations and experiments, statistics, summaries and plans for directing research. The Research and Development Bureau's sectors are responsible for the contents. A report is published once a month.

4) Research report series

The purpose of this research report series is to give information concerning the results of research. The research sector takes care that reports and résumés of new research are published in this series. The research report series is published continuously, the number of copies printed being according to need. The series' report is distributed to the staff of the Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education.

5) Experiment report series.

The purpose of this series is to give continuous information concerning experiment results. The experiment sector looks after the publication of new reports and résumés. The experiment report series is published continuously in the same way as the research report series.

6) Book series

The book series gathers together research and experiment information together with research summaries. The research and experiment sectors are responsible for this book series, published as the need arises. Operation plans may also be published in the book series.

7) "Information Bulletin"

The purpose of the English language "Information Bulletin" is to give general information about research and experiment and the presentation of selected information concerning the sectors' activities. The research and experiment sectors are responsible for its contents and it is published three or four times a year.

8) Other activities

Press services, radio and TV services
Researchers' seminars

Information is given in the press, particularly those papers belonging to the teaching field, about the results of research and experiments and interviews with investigators are published. In special research report columns selected research résumés are published.

The research sector is responsible for the contents of what is published and the press is informed according to need.

Radio and TV services are used according to possibilities offered. The work of researchers' seminars is the exchange of information between research and development activities together with general accomodation of ideas.

6.

A condition for the continuing development of utilization is that its results are evaluated. It must be made clear whether the utilizers have really used research results beneficially, and if not, why this is so. On the basis of the results of a follow-up, necessary corrective measures can be taken.

A follow-up can be made by using the expert group's report of actions to be taken. Methods used in a follow-up are, for example, interviews, written analyses by the National Board of Education and the Ministry of Education, textbook analysis and follow-up research.

APPENDIX 1

NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION
Research and Development Bureau
Helsinki

Participants at the meeting:

Reference: meeting of expert group concerning the following research report: _____

_____

_____

_____

Subject: report of actions to be taken

RESEARCH STAGE	x
1. Research scheme	
2. Intermediate report	
3. Final statement	
4.	

ACTION TAKEN	REALIZATION	OBSERVATIONS
1. Proposal for utilization prepared by the researcher sent to the following:		
2. Inform the following conference groups:		

ACTION TAKEN	REALIZATION	OBSERVATIONS
3. Inform the following committies:		
4. Inform the following commissions:		
5. Inform the following work groups:		
6. Researcher lectures on following occasions:		
7. Rep. from Board of Education participates at the following meetings where matter dealt with:		

ACTION TAKEN	REALIZATION	OBSERVATIONS
.....		
8. Memo concerning research results sent to those mentioned in appendix 2		
9. Research report sent to those mentioned in appendix 3		
10. Delegation informs following of research:		
11. Members of delegation:		

ACTION TAKEN	REALIZATION	OBSERVATIONS
12. Inform following members of Ministry of Education:		
13. Other points:		
14. Means of communication:		
15. Memo published: (where and when)		
16. Researcher's interview published: (where and when)		

ACTION TAKEN	REALIZATION	OBSERVATIONS
17. Researcher seminar organised: (where and when)		
18. Resumé prepared for press (in which paper published)		
19. No influence for some time on utilization action		
20. Other actions taken:		
21. Next expert group meeting concering this research held:		

_____

(date)

Bureau chief _____

I have verified that the proposals for taking action have been put into practise.

_____

(date)

Bureau chief _____

APPENDIX 2

DISTRIBUTION OF MEMORANDA

Name of research: .....
.....

Memoranda concerning this research to be distributed to the following.

Addressee
1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
6. 7. 8. 9. 10.
11. 12. 13. 14. 15.
16. 17. 18. 19. 20.
21. 22. 23. 24. 25.

APPENDIX 3

DISTRIBUTION OF REPORTS

Name of research: .....

.....

Reports concerning this research to be distributed to the following:

Addressee
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.
11.
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